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Implementing Training Standards

“Local responders will have the greatest effect on saving lives and bare the greatest risk of losing their lives responding to a terrorism incident or disaster.”

The importance of training standards could not be felt more deeply than by states and local governments who have gone through major disasters or terrorism attacks. As Oklahoma City, 9/11, and most recently, Katrina vividly remind us, local emergency responders are the community’s first line of response, regardless of the event. Community protection and well-being depends on the training, experience, and abilities of local responders.

In 2000 and 2001, the National Governors' Association (NGA) Center for Best Practices and the National Emergency Management Association (NEMA) co-sponsored a series of regional forums on emergency preparedness. One outcome of the forums was the state officials’ recommendation for states to mandate WMD specific training and pursue standardized training and exercises¹.

Washington State recognizes that developing training standards is an important strategic goal that will “assure readiness for complex emergency responses.”² Similarly, Homeland Security Region VI, which encompasses King County and Seattle ranked specifying desired levels of training, “high.”³

Emergency responders throughout Washington favor statewide training standards. They want to be confident that the people who are working with them and supporting them, especially those they do not work with on a daily basis have a minimum level of training. Additionally, they recognize that standards increase interoperability and enable personnel on-scene to speak the same language, share information, and take a uniform approach to problems.

In addition, to enhancing safety, training standards will help Washington and its jurisdictions to measure their level of preparedness, target resources to close gaps, and document compliance with national preparedness goals.

National Incident Management System (NIMS)

NIMS is a comprehensive system of incident management. It provides a consistent framework for all jurisdictional levels for all types of emergencies. It promotes interoperability and facilitates resource acquisition during large-scale or complex incidents.

Homeland Security Presidential Directive (HSPD)-5, Management of Domestic Incidents, requires all federal departments and agencies to adopt and implement NIMS, and requires states, territories, tribes, and local governments to implement the NIMS to receive federal preparedness funding⁴.

On September 30, 2004, former Governor Gary Locke signed a proclamation directing state agencies and the Washington Emergency Management Division to adopt and integrate NIMS. NIMS Compliance Activities to be accomplished in FY2005⁵ include:

States and Territories

- Incorporate NIMS into existing training programs and exercises;
- Ensure that federal preparedness funding supports state, local and tribal NIMS implementation;
- Incorporate NIMS into Emergency Operations Plans;
- Promote intrastate mutual aid agreements;
- Coordinate and provide NIMS technical assistance to local entities; and
- Institutionalize the use of the Incident Command System.

State, Territorial, Local and Tribal Jurisdictions

- Complete the NIMS Awareness Course: "National Incident Management System (NIMS), An Introduction" IS 700.
- Formally recognize the NIMS and adopt NIMS principles and policies.
- Determine which NIMS requirements already have been met.
- Develop a strategy and timeframe for full NIMS implementation.
- Institutionalize the use of the Incident Command System (ICS).

To receive FY2006 preparedness grant funds from any federal department or agency, states had to self-certify that they have met the minimum FY2005 requirements. On August 30, 2005 Adjutant General Timothy Lowenberg certified that the State of Washington in coordination with local governmental and tribal entities successfully complied with the minimum FY05 NIMS compliance requirements.

The NIMS Integration Center (NIC) has defined NIMS FY2006 compliance activities in their NIMS Implementation Matrix for States and Territories⁴ and NIMS Implementation Matrix for Tribal and Local Jurisdictions⁶. Required training is detailed in the NIC's October 2005 guidance, FY2006 Training Requirements⁷. Beginning in FY2007, all federal preparedness funding will be

conditioned upon full compliance with the NIMS. Full compliance means meeting both FY2005 and FY2006 criteria.

To meet NIMS FY2006 compliance criteria, the Washington State Patrol (WSP) and Emergency Management Division (EMD) entered into a joint operation to facilitate NIMS training throughout the State. WSP has been tasked with coordinating and providing technical assistance for all state agencies. They are planning to provide training for instructors from each agency, to build a train-the-trainer capability in each agency.

Washington EMD is responsible facilitating NIMS compliance among local agencies. To support this effort, they are in the process of recruiting qualified NIMS/ICS trainers from homeland security regions, tribes, and federal and state agencies throughout the State to provide NIMS/ICS training in their region. EMD will provide the trainers with statewide credentialing, course materials, and State certificates of training. EMD will also sponsor their course delivery of specific NIMS/ICS courses.

EMD is including the State-credentialed NIMS/ICS trainers in HSI's trainer database. This will facilitate trainer and training resource sharing, coordination of curriculum updates, and documentation for federal compliance requirements.

The Office for Domestic Preparedness (ODP) is in the final stages of approving HSI's online NIMS IS-700 course. This is the first and only, State-customized course they have approved. HSI's online course is tailored to Washington's emergency response system. It is also tied to a tracking system that documents completions. Training certificates are immediately available to trainees and training managers. The information collected will be readily available for validating NIMS compliance.

The State Gap Analysis found that the level of NIMS/ICS training already achieved varied from "none" to "completely trained" regardless of discipline, geography, population, and size of agency. In the majority of cases, management level personnel had received some training, but field staff had received little or no training. In particular, health care organizations reported a need for training.

Recommendation:

Continue to uphold NIMS/ICS as a Washington State Standard. Expand the requisite training as required by federal guidance. Monitor the extent of training, identify training gaps, and target resources to where they are most needed. Ensure that refresher training is available and provided to support the current investment.

Recommendation:

Expand HSI's trainer database to include Washington's NIMS/ICS trainers.

Recommendation:

Promote HSI's ODP- approved online NIMS course (equivalent to IS 700) to ensure responders receive State-tailored training and allow completions to be tracked.

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Awareness-Level Training

Awareness-level training provides responders with the basic level information that they need to recognize a threat or abnormal condition, take personal protective measures, protect/secure the scene, and notify others. The Department of Justice's “Emergency Responder Guidelines⁸” contains current ODP recommendations for awareness-level training. They are:

- Recognize hazardous materials incidents.
- Know the protocols used to detect the potential presence of weapons of mass destruction (WMD) agents or materials.
- Know and follow self-protection measures for WMD events and hazardous materials events.
- Know procedures for protecting a potential crime scene.
- Know and follow agency/organization's scene security and control procedures for WMD and hazardous material events.
- Possess and know how to properly use equipment to contact a dispatcher or higher authorities to report information collected at the scene and to request additional assistance or emergency response personnel.

The State Gap Analysis found that awareness-level training is not being received by all response disciplines statewide. Responders from emergency communications, EMS, and volunteer agencies, including volunteer fire still need hazmat and/or terrorism awareness training. More awareness-level training is also needed in Western Washington, as well as by front line staff. Awareness-level training is an ongoing need for new employees, as refresher training is for others.

The gap analysis also shows that the State's responders are not confident in their ability to perform during large-scale incidents that require them to work within an overarching response system that includes other disciplines and jurisdictions. This stems primarily from their lack of understanding about other disciplines' roles and responsibilities, and apprehension about how they fit in and

what is expected from them. This “awareness-level” knowledge is critical to being able to perform effectively during incidents involving mutual aid.

Washington has good mechanisms in place to provide awareness-level training. The State has many trainers certified to teach awareness-level courses. Additionally, awareness-level training is available through the State’s public safety academies, professional associations, HSI’s online courses, federal training institutions, and other venues.

Recommendation:

In addition to NIMS/ICS, the Emergency Management Council should adopt a statewide, awareness-level, cross-disciplinary, training standard. Ensure that the standard complies with current federal guidance such as the Department of Justice’s “Emergency Responder Guidelines” and includes training on the roles and responsibilities of emergency response disciplines.

Develop criteria for who needs to achieve the standard and evaluate the viability of using a mandate, funding or some other means to encourage participation.

Monitor the extent of awareness-level training, identify training gaps, and target resources to where they are most needed. Ensure that refresher training is available and provided to support the current investment.

Tracking Trained Responders

A crucial element of building a standard is being able to track completions. In order to use a standard as a basis for credentialing, track the State’s level of preparedness, and document compliance with national preparedness goals, it is necessary to have a centralized system for tracking who has attained the standard.

Recommendation:

Develop a statewide system for tracking responders who have met the State’s NIMS/ICS and awareness-level standards. Use the information as the basis for credentialing, to monitor statewide preparedness, and document compliance with national preparedness goals.

Readiness Benchmarks

During the gap analysis, a number of responders favored statewide readiness benchmarks to use for evaluating their level of preparedness. Without objectives, it is not possible to measure progress or target resources. Readiness benchmarks will also reduce statewide variability in levels of preparedness and instill confidence in entities that meet or exceed them. The lack of benchmarks also “suggests endlessly escalating program expenditures, since there is no

logical end point to a process whose only goal is to improve from current standing.”⁹

Recommendation: Identify readiness benchmarks that state and local emergency response agencies can use to evaluate their level of preparedness.

In order to receive future federal funding and to meet the intent of Homeland Security Presidential Directive (HSPD)-8, National Preparedness, Washington must align its State preparedness strategy with the National Preparedness Goal. The Goal “aims for federal, state, local, and tribal entities to achieve and sustain nationally accepted, risk-based, target levels of capability for prevention, preparedness, response, and recovery for major events, especially terrorism.”¹⁰ The target levels of capability are based on National Planning Scenarios,¹¹ a Universal Task list (UTL),¹² and a Target Capabilities List (TCL).¹³

Some capabilities are universal and should be built and maintained in every jurisdiction. If a capability is needed quickly to save lives or reduce damage, it needs to be available in or near most jurisdictions. Less time sensitive capabilities can be regionalized or centralized. Some capabilities that require teams with specialized training and equipment should be located in jurisdictions where there are sufficient resources and demand to sustain proficiency, and that can best serve regional needs. The necessity for a given entity to develop specific capabilities is also based on population density, critical infrastructure, and other risk factors¹⁴.

HSI developed a resource to help state and local agencies conduct capabilities-based planning. This Capabilities-Based Planning Instrument, available on HSI’s website, allows the user to follow a simple, interactive process to find and assemble information contained in current federal guidance, including the National Preparedness Goal, UTL and TCL.

Recommendation: Work with regions to conduct capability-based planning. Help them to use recent federal guidance, HSI’s Capability-Based Planning Instrument, GIS data, risk assessments, and other information to determine what capabilities need to be acquired and maintained by each jurisdiction. Use the outcome to determine training priorities. Provide information about the results to other regions.

¹ States’ Regional Terrorism Policy Forums, “Protecting States’ Critical Infrastructures” sponsored by the National Governor’s Association Center for Best Practices and the National Emergency Management Association, 2000 and 2001.

²The Washington Statewide Homeland Security Strategic Plan, Team Washington, A Collaborative Partnership, Interim 2005 Plan.

³Region 6 Homeland Security Strategic Plan, Geographic King County, Washington State, Public and Private Organizations, October 2005.

⁴State and Territorial Compliance Activities: Federal Fiscal Year 2006 (Oct. 1, 2005 - Sept. 30, 2006), NIMS Integration Center.

⁵Letter from Homeland Security Secretary Tom Ridge to Governors, September 8, 2004.

⁶Tribal Government and Local Jurisdiction Compliance Activities: Federal Fiscal Year 2006 (Oct. 1, 2005 - Sept. 30, 2006), NIMS Integration Center.

⁷FFY06 NIMS Training Requirements, NIMS Integration Center.

⁸Emergency Responder Guidelines, U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Justice Programs, Office for Domestic Preparedness, August 1, 2002.

⁹“The Problems of Preparedness: Challenges Facing the U.S. Domestic Preparedness Program,” Richard A. Falkenrath, ESDP Discussion Paper ESDP-2000-05, John F. Kennedy School of Government, Harvard University, Dec. 2000,

¹⁰Interim National Preparedness Goal, Homeland Security Presidential Directive 8: National Preparedness, U.S. Department of Homeland Security, March 31, 2005.

¹¹Planning Scenarios, Executive Summaries, Created for Use in National, Federal, State, and Local Homeland Security Preparedness Activities, Version 2.0, The Homeland Security Council, David Howe, Senior Director for Response and Planning, July 2004.

¹²Universal Task List: Version 2.1, U.S. Department of Homeland Security, Office of State and Local Government Coordination and Preparedness, May 23, 2005.

¹³Target Capabilities List, Version 1.1, U.S. Department of Homeland Security, Office of State and Local Government Coordination and Preparedness, May 23, 2005.

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